I/WE CLAIM:

1. A method for treating an autoimmune disease in a mammal which method comprises administering to said mammal an effective amount of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said soluble antigen is a foreign antigen.

3. The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said soluble foreign antigen is administered to said mammal prior to administering said antibody.

4. The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said soluble foreign antigen and said antibody are incubated together to form antibody-antigen complexes prior to administering said complexes to said mammal.

5. The method as claimed in claim 3 or 4 wherein said foreign antigen is ovalbumin.

6. The method as claimed in claim 5 wherein said antibody is monoclonal or polyclonal.

7. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said soluble antigen is endogenous.

8. The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein said endogenous soluble antigen is obtained from said mammal and incubated with said antibody to form antibody-antigen complexes, said complexes being administered to said mammal.

9. The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein said soluble endogenous antigen is selected from albumin and transferrin or a combination thereof.

10. The method as claimed in claim 9 wherein said antibody is a polyclonal antibody or monoclonal antibody.

11. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said mammal is a human or a non-human mammal.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein said at least one antibody is administered intravenously, interperitoneally, intradermally, intramuscularly, subcutaneously, orally or rectally.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein said effective amount of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen is administered for a time and under conditions sufficient to inhibit platelet clearance.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said autoimmune disease is selected from Immune thrombocytopenia, Immune cytopenia, Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP), Neuropathy, Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy (CIDP), Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS), Kawasaki's disease, Dermatomyositis, SLE, Myasthenia gravis, Post-transfusion purpura, Rheumatoid arthritis, Inflammatory arthritis, Eaton-Lambert syndrome, toxic epidermal necrolysis, and polymyositis.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said autoimmune disease is immune thrombocytopenia (ITP).

16. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said autoimmune disease is inflammatory arthritis.

17. A method of inhibiting platelet clearance in a patient in need thereof which comprises administering to the patient a therapeutic composition comprising a therapeutic amount of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, said therapeutic amount being sufficient to inhibit platelet clearance in said patient.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the therapeutic amount of the at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen is administered ranges from about 0.1µg to about 1g per kg of body weight per day.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen is administered for a time sufficient to therapeutically increase and maintain platelet cell counts.

20. The method as claimed in claim 17 wherein said soluble antigen is a foreign antigen.

21. The method as claimed in claim 20 wherein said soluble foreign antigen is administered to said mammal prior to administering said antibody.

22. The method as claimed in claim 20 wherein said soluble foreign antigen and said antibody are incubated together to form antibody-antigen or antibody-antigen-blood cell complexes prior to administering said complexes to said mammal.

23. The method as claimed in claim 20 wherein said foreign antigen is ovalbumin.

24. The method as claimed in claim 23 wherein said antibody is monoclonal or polyclonal.

25. The method as claimed in claim 17 wherein said soluble antigen is endogenous.

26. The method as claimed in claim 25 wherein said soluble endogenous antigen is selected from albumin and transferrin or a combination thereof.

27. The method as claimed in 25 wherein said endogenous soluble antigen is obtained from said mammal and incubated with said antibody to form antibody-antigen complexes, said complexes being administered to said mammal.

28. The method as claimed in claim 25 wherein said mammal is a human or a non-human mammal.

29. The method according to claim 25, wherein said at least one antibody is administered intravenously, interperitoneally, intradermally, intramuscularly, subcutaneously, orally or rectally.

30. A pharmaceutical composition for treating an autoimmune disease, comprising an effective amount of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen in combination with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

31. The composition as claimed in claim 30, wherein said antibody is capable of inhibiting platelet clearance.

32. The composition as claimed in claim 30 wherein said soluble antigen is a foreign antigen.

33. The composition as claimed in claim 32 wherein said soluble foreign antigen is administered to said mammal prior to administering said antibody.

34. The composition as claimed in claim 32 wherein said soluble foreign antigen and said antibody are incubated together to form antibody-antigen or antibody-antigen-blood cell complexes prior to administering said complexes to said mammal.

35. The composition as claimed in claim 32 wherein said foreign antigen is ovalbumin.

36. The composition as claimed in claim 35 wherein said antibody is monoclonal or polyclonal.

37. The composition as claimed in claim 32 wherein said soluble antigen is endogenous.

38. The composition as claimed in claim 32 wherein said soluble endogenous antigen is selected from albumin and transferrin or a combination thereof.

39. The composition as claimed in 32 wherein said endogenous soluble antigen is obtained from said mammal and incubated with said antibody to form antibody-antigen complexes, said complexes being administered to said mammal.

40. The composition as claimed in claim 39 wherein said mammal is a human or a non-human mammal.

41. The composition according to claim 39, wherein said at least one antibody is administered intravenously, intradermally, interperitoneally, intramuscularly , subcutaneously, orally or rectally.

42. The composition as claimed in claim 39, wherein said antibody is capable of inhibiting platelet clearance.

43. A pharmaceutical composition for treating an autoimmune disease, comprising an effective amount of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen in combination with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

44. The use of at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen for the manufacture of a medicament for the therapeutic and/or prophylactic treatment of an autoimmune disease.

45. The use of claim 44 wherein said medicament comprises an therapeutic amount of said at lease one antibody specific for a soluble antigen effective to slow and/or inhibit platelet clearance when administered to a patient in need thereof.

46. The use of claim 45 wherein the therapeutic amount of the at least one antibody specific for a soluble antigen is administered ranges from about 0.1µg to about 1g per kg of body weight per day.

47. The use as claimed in claim 44 wherein said soluble antigen is a foreign antigen.

48. The use as claimed in claim 47 wherein said soluble foreign antigen is administered to said mammal prior to administering said antibody.

49. The use as claimed in claim 47 wherein said soluble foreign antigen and said antibody are incubated together to form antibody-antigen or antibody-antigen-blood cell complexes prior to administering said complexes to said mammal.

50. The use as claimed in claim 47 wherein said foreign antigen is ovalbumin.

51. The use as claimed in claim 45 wherein said antibody is monoclonal or polyclonal.

52. The use as claimed in claim 45 wherein said soluble antigen is endogenous.

53. The use as claimed in claim 52 wherein said soluble endogenous antigen is selected from albumin and transferrin or a combination thereof.

54. The use as claimed in 52 wherein said endogenous soluble antigen is obtained from said mammal and incubated with said antibody to form antibody-antigen complexes, said complexes being administered to said mammal.

55. The use as claimed in claim 52 wherein said mammal is a human or a non-human mammal.

56. The use according to claim 52, wherein said at least one antibody is administered intravenously, interperitoneally, intradermally, intramuscularly, subcutaneously, orally or rectally.